

periods, both marble and other stones have been used, either as contributing to utility or administering to luxury; and this remark applies not only to those substances of a soft nature, easily to be worked, but to those of adamant hardness, such as porphyry and granite, which are most difficult to cut. In visiting the Egyptian Saloon in the British Museum, the interest and astonishment produced by those sublime fragments of the ancient Egyptians, is greatly increased by the knowledge that these substances resist the finest tempered steel. The intense hardness of some may be judged from the fact of a workman having once been employed to make a hole in one of them; but after spoiling some dozens of drills, and wasting several days' labour, he was compelled to abandon the attempt.

But although a workman at that time did not succeed in so small a matter, works are now being executed in a material equally hard and durable as the Egyptian stones; I allude to the sculpture in Scotch granites. In various parts of the world at this time the different substances found in their several localities are worked into form, some of them of intense hardness; for instance, in Sweden porphyry is worked into pedestals, vases, &c.; in Germany, agates, jaspers, and bloodstone, are cut and polished in the most surprising manner. In some mosaic-work lately brought from the East-Indies, flowers, fruit, and other devices are formed with bloodstone, jasper, cornelian, agate, and other coloured stones equally hard, and inlaid in antique statuary marble: they formed corbices and pilasters in the buildings whence they were brought. The green carbonate of copper, known as malachite, is much esteemed; it comes from Siberia, and the Russians manufacture it into some most elegant forms. It is worthy observation that until recently this substance was found only in Siberia; but now it is found in considerable quantities in South Australia.

The rock of Gibraltar, by the soldiers garrisoned there, is made into a few simple forms, the most usual being models of mortars and cannon, some of which exhibit the stratification of the stone very beautifully. The stone of which the island of Malta consists is worked by the Maltese into a number of very elegant devices; but those most worthy attention are the models of architectural ruins, which they execute with surprising accuracy of detail, the stone being well adapted for such kind of work. In the lava obtained from Mount Vesuvius, the Neapolitans manufacture very beautiful cameos, intaglios, and other ornaments.

The Egyptians were remarkable for cutting small ornamental objects; and in the Egyptian-room (British Museum) upwards of twenty different kinds of stone are exhibited. In the sacred writings the terms crystal, agate, precious stones, costly stones, pleasant stones, and such like, occur frequently, and under such different aspects, that it scarcely can be supposed they were only used for jewellery purposes or personal ornament. The Prophet Ezekiel speaks thus of Tyre:—"Syria sends her traders to thy markets, and brings thee purple embroidered work, fine linen, rubies, coral, and agate."

When speaking of the materials collected for the building and embellishment of the temple, David mentions, onyx stones, and stones to be set; glittering stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones and marble stones in abundance; therefore, as the precise use of these stones is not mentioned, perhaps it will not be presuming too much to suppose, that the most skilful artisans were employed to produce ornamental works in marble of the most elaborate description to adorn the temple, thereby adding to its magnificence and grandeur. It cannot be doubted, that ornamental marble-work for interior decoration was much used; and in the book of Esther, inlaid pavement is particularly mentioned,—a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble.

British Marbles.—The marbles of the British islands, until recently, have been almost disregarded, and this without any satisfactory reason being assigned. One reason, probably, why our own productions have not been more used for useful and decorative purposes may be, that the stone is not found in sufficiently

large masses: but this remark does not apply to all, for some are obtained of a size adapted for pillars, tables, and chimney-pieces,—and in the new Houses of Parliament, for internal decoration, where marble is intended to be used, the whole will be the production of the United Kingdom. The importance of introducing into general use marbles the production of this country has long been recognised, for on reference to a report of the Society of Arts, so far back as the year 1806, they offered prizes for specimens of British marbles to be sent in to their museum.*

In the minds of many, an extraordinary prejudice exists against English marbles, and no difficulty arises in the attempt to shew them that their views are groundless. Their feelings may, perhaps, have arisen from the fact that no place existed where a view could be obtained of a collection of native marbles. It is worthy of observation that the British Museum, with its splendid galleries of minerals, does not possess a perfect collection of British marbles. But this claim no longer exists; it has been filled up in a manner alike honourable to its founders as to those gentlemen who are bringing it to so high a state of perfection.—I allude to the Geological Museum, in Craig's-court. This museum has been formed for the purpose of shewing the mineral wealth of the kingdom; and in it may be seen examples of metallic ores, building stones, granites, and marble.

Spar.—In England, ornamental masonry appears to have been carried on the longest in Derbyshire; which county is singularly rich in mineral productions; yet, notwithstanding the great variety, it is remarkable, that with the exception of alabaster (to be noticed hereafter), the masons in that part never directed their attention to any other substance beyond fluor spar. A work, published nearly fifty years since, upon the minerals of this country, mentions thirty varieties of spar, and, in his description, the author says, it is "impossible to account for the great variety and singular disposition of the veins and sudden contrast of the finest colours which occur in this substance."

The objects originally made of spar were vases, columns, and obelisks, but generally they were solid lumps of stone, and from their great weight, most inconvenient to move about. But later works, besides being copies of the most approved forms of the antique, are manufactured very thin and light, so that a taper placed within displays the most extraordinary and richest colours in the mineral world. Apart from its splendid veins and hues, this substance is valuable from its being peculiar to this country.

A prodigious waste of this stone was once carried on when abundance could be obtained from the mine, but now it is extremely scarce and expensive, the price having risen from 14*l.* to 60*l.* per ton, and even larger sums have been given for very fine specimens. The spar, or blue-john, as it is locally termed, is not found very large; some pieces, however, have been obtained about a foot in thickness, but are very rare, the usual thickness being only three or four inches. Some persons imagine that the fluor spar is obtained from a quarry, of that thickness, but this is not the case, it is only found in detached masses, in holes or fissures of the limestone rock.

The first mill that was built for Sir Thomas Lombe, at Derby (who introduced the manufacture of silk into that town), was at a later period converted into a manufactory of spar goods, and being by the side of the Derwent, all the lumps which were considered useless were thrown into the river, but, as before mentioned, the spar having become scarce, when the water is low, persons go and dig in the bed of the river to obtain some of those pieces which were thrown away forty or fifty years ago: they make them into smelling-bottles and other small objects, and, as the finest stone was found at that time, these articles are most beautiful specimens of the substance.

This stone is highly esteemed on the continent, and the larger specimens are considered worthy of a place in the galleries of continental monarchs and nobles.

Among other writers, Sir Gardner Wilkinson, in his history of the ancient Egyptians, sup-

poses that the Murrhine of the ancients was certainly fluor spar, and he arrives at this conclusion, not only from the accounts given of it, but from the circumstance that wherever a representation is attempted, it appears to aim at producing those peculiar colours and wavy indications which are seen in these transparent and veiny specimens.

Few subjects have excited more discussion among the learned than the question of Murrhine; what it really was being the great and still undecided point; this view of it, however, makes the fluor spar more interesting, and it will further rise in the estimation of all who remark its extraordinary beauty.*

NOTES IN THE PROVINCES.

A CHURCH with chalk columns, pillars, &c., not even seasoned, has of late been in course of erection at Prestwood, Bucks, according to the local *Chronicle*, and got on swimmingly till the frost began to operate on the moisture in that celebrated "absorbent," when the columns, pillars, &c., split, of course; and crumbled into pieces; and, besides a damage to the amount of at least 100*l.*, it is said, on this "cheap material," will occasion the additional expense of a replacement in stone, making good the old proverb,—"penny wise, pound foolish."—The restored Norman Tower at Bury St. Edmund's has been opened to the public as a thoroughfare through the area, and as the bell-tower of St. James's Church. —The new Savings Bank at Cambridge has been opened. It is in the Italian style, with two fronts, and contains a hall, 18 feet square, bank room, and actuary's residence. The architect was Mr. John Smith, of Cambridge. —The new County Gaol at Winchester, which is progressing towards completion, is compared by a contemporary to a "huge barrack of water-closets," a circumstance attributable, we presume, to the fact of its being a building of comparatively confined dimensions, carried out on the separate system, and unjust, if intended to reflect on the architect. It is concentrative in form. "Gas is laid out to every cell, and the whole building is warmed and ventilated by means of nine large boilers placed round the central portion, immediately under the shaft or tower which forms so conspicuous a feature of the elevation."—The chapel and exercising grounds are also of course concentrative. —The octagonal font in St. James's Church, Taunton, has been restored and removed out of the mural recess in which it was concealed. Two of the figures on it correspond with those remaining in the niches of the tower, and it is believed to be coeval with the church, which was built in the thirteenth century. Mr. A. A. Clarke, of Taunton, an artist, has made drawings of it, which, it is said, are to be lithographed. —A number of workmen, says the *Liverpool Albion*, are engaged laying down in the grand vestibule of the Town-hall a floor of encaustic tiles. —The Woods and Forests, says a *Carlisle paper*, have, with characteristic taste, roofed Lancaster Abbey with blue slates, and have thereby succeeded in making it look very like a stable barn. —Christ Church, Penrith, is nearly completed. It is built of red freestone, and is Gothic in style, with a great octagon dome on the west end, tapering to a point. The interior consists of nave, chancel, and two side aisles. The distance from the chancel to the west-end is 100 feet, and the width from north to south 45 feet. The nave is separated from the side aisles by a number of pillars, supporting Gothic arches, which extend east and west, and are formed of white freestone, from Lammooby Moor. An arch, 27 feet in height, spans the nave on the east, and separates it from the chancel. A stove-room is to heat the church by means of iron pipes. The pulpit is to be of white freestone. —The Glasgow Association for the establishing of lodging-houses for the working-classes, have opened their new lodging-house in Low Green-street.

BUILDERS' BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION.

—A subscription hall is to be given at the Freemasons' Tavern, on the 9th of January, in aid of this institution.